

Stages and the New Hampshire Alternate Assessment Process

OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal benchmark software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the New Hampshire's Alternate Assessment Process because:

1. **Stages correlates with the content of New Hampshire curriculum frameworks.**
2. **Stages generates primary evidence for the learner's portfolio.**
3. **Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
4. **Stages assists the learner's IEP and/or instructional teams with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

1. Stages correlates with New Hampshire curriculum frameworks.

Stages ensures meaningful and effective access to general curriculum areas. Stages content aligns with general education curriculum standards in K-3 (Primary) mathematics, reading, and writing, as well as functional living skills. Please refer to the next section, "New Hampshire Mathematics and English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks" for detailed matching between the informal assessment software and specific curriculum standards.

2. Stages generates primary evidence for the learner's portfolio.

During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructional team member may wish to then print that screen or save the information as a text-format electronic file.

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid.

3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities

include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include various community settings.

3. Stages assists the learner's IEP and/or instructional teams with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's IEP/instructional team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the New Hampshire alternative assessment cycle. The Stages software is a comprehensive tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable portfolio evidence, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.